

developing a comprehensive language services response

This tip sheet covers the key elements of planning for language services.

What are language services?

Language services encompass a range of services that facilitate communication with clients with limited English language proficiency.

These services include:

- i. use of accredited interpreters
- ii. provision of translated material
- iii. employment of staff who can provide services to clients in a language other than English
- iv. use of multilingual or bilingual staff to provide limited interpreting

Sometimes more than one approach is needed to ensure that language services meet client needs.

A language service response should include the following elements:

Policies and procedures

It is a Victorian Government requirement that agencies which provide direct care services should have clear policies for delivering translating and interpreting services. These policies should comply with Victorian Government policy and standards, cover relevant legal issues, specify when accredited interpreters and translators need to be used, and address the needs of current and potential clients.

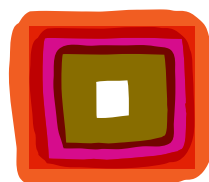
Good practice suggestion

In your procedures, include a requirement to use 'interpreter required' stickers on client files to alert staff that an interpreter needs to be booked in advance.

Resources:

Department of Human Services: Language Services Policy, Victorian Government
www.dhs.vic.gov.au/multicultural/html/langservices.htm

Department of Justice: Language Services Policy and Guidelines for Working with Interpreters and Translators
www.justice.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/21283400404a4214a983fbf5f2791d4a/Language_Service_Policy_Guide_2006.pdf?MOD=AJPERES



Dedicated resources

Make sure that you set a budget and allocate resources to language services in the planning phase of a service or project. The allocation of resources should be reflective of need, and should be monitored to respond to changing circumstances or demographics.

Good practice suggestion:

Dedicate a staff position for coordinating and monitoring language services.

Staff training

Staff require a level of knowledge and skill to use language services effectively. Training can be provided in house or by an external trainer and should be offered at employee induction and on a regular basis to ensure skill maintenance.

Good practice suggestion:

Provide a calendar of relevant training on an annual basis.

Resources:

The Centre for Culture, Ethnicity & Health (CEH) offers training in using language services, as do most interpreting and translation service providers.

Quality measures

It is important to monitor and evaluate the quality, usage and effectiveness of language services. Report the results across your organisation. This provides feedback to staff as well as data that can be used to monitor processes and measure improvements.

Good practice suggestion:

A central language services booking system will enable the organisation to monitor usage, trends and unmet needs, and ensure that resources are used efficiently.

Resources:

- VOMA Guide for Improving the Use of Translating and Interpreting Services
- Victorian Government Standards for Data Collection on Interpreting and Translating

Promoting language services

Promote the availability of interpreters as widely as you can. Place signage such as posters and brochures (including interpreter cards) in foyer and reception areas. You should also take an active approach by distributing interpreter cards and inform clients of the service rather than waiting for them to ask.

Good practice suggestion:

Promote the availability of interpreters during information sessions to community groups.

Resources:

The Victorian Government has information kits and resources promoting the availability of professional interpreters. These include posters, stickers and interpreter cards. Visit: www.multicultural.vic.gov.au

Most interpreting agencies provide posters that promote the availability of interpreters.

Other tip sheets in this series

[Assessing the need for a professional interpreter](#)

[Arranging an interpreter](#)

[Working with interpreters](#)

Produced by the **Centre for Culture, Ethnicity & Health**
(03) 9342 9700 | enquiries@ceh.org.au | www.ceh.org.au

Funded by the Office of Gaming and Racing, Department of Justice